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TAGS: [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: Some Kurds on Jordan's Border Return to Iraq;
Restored UNHCR Iraq Operations -- Including Resettlement --
Required to Convince the Rest

REF: A) Amman 4001

B) Cheyne/Rusch July 10 e-mail

[1](#)1. (U) This is a joint report from Amman and Cairo refcoords and contains an action request in para 8.

[1](#)2. (SBU) Summary and Action Request: Amman and Cairo refcoords traveled to the Jordanian-Iraqi border July 8 to meet with Iranian Kurds who seek resettlement in a third country. UNHCR reported that an additional 79 Iranian Kurds have left no-man's land (NML) for northern Iraq, with another five Kurdish families rumored to have left NML for Iran. The number of Kurds in NML is now less than 1,000. However, the Kurds who returned to northern Iraq reported that UNHCR is unable to provide protection or any form of assistance to refugees in the north, discouraging others from following them. The Kurds' leadership therefore continues to insist that they will not leave NML except for resettlement in a third country. Full-scale resumption of UNHCR activities in Iraq -- beginning in the north -- appears to be the only way to resolve the lingering problem at NML. Department's guidance on possible DHS resettlement processing in northern Iraq is requested. End summary and action request.

[1](#)3. (U) Amman- and Cairo-based regional refcoords made a joint trip to the Jordanian-Iraqi border on July 8 to meet with Iranian Kurds who seek resettlement in a third country. As reported ref a, a core group of 1,000 Iranian Kurds from Iraq's Al Tash refugee camp have been in no-man's land (NML) at the Iraqi-Jordanian border since April 12, seeking temporary asylum in Jordan and resettlement in a third country. UNHCR (correctly, in our opinion) refuses to conduct resettlement screening in NML, fearing it would create a pull factor for disgruntled refugees and Iraqi nationals from throughout Iraq.

[1](#)4. (SBU) During their July 8 meeting, refcoords repeated previous assurances that the US would consider the Iranian Kurds for resettlement if they would return to Iraq. The Kurds' leadership flatly rejected even a temporary return to Iraq. Northern Iraq is not their land, the Kurds said, and their political affiliations make them vulnerable to cross-border threats from Iranian security agents. The Iran-Iraq border is porous, they argued, and coalition forces are unable to protect Kurdish political activists from Iranian intelligence agents who have a known record of assassinating opponents abroad. The group at NML claims to be composed entirely of political activists, with five different political movements represented: the Democratic Party of Kurdistan of Iran (DPKI), the Communist Party (Kommula), the Constitutionalist Movements, the Mujahadeen-e-Khalq (MEK) and Khabat. The Kurds also claimed that Jalal Talabani and the PUK, who have been encouraging the Al Tash Kurds to resettle in northern Iraq, are known to have good relations with Iran and therefore are not to be trusted.

[1](#)5. (U) The Kurds confirmed UNHCR's report that 79 individuals had left NML for northern Iraq (the village of Kallar, near Sulaimaniyah) but denied reports that 5 Kurdish families had left NML for Iran. (UNHCR separately confirmed that the number of Kurds in NML is now less than 1,000 but said it is unable to provide more precise figures, as it has never implemented a camp registration system in NML.) According to the NML camp leadership, the Kurds who returned to northern Iraq reported that UNHCR is unable to provide protection or any form of assistance to refugees in the north and have discouraged others from following them. Although the KDP and PUK have made good on their promises of providing land for the Al Tash Kurds, they cannot provide food or humanitarian assistance to the group and UNHCR, the Kurds noted bitterly, also is unable to provide any assistance. The camp committee asked refcoords how UNHCR and the US could possibly advocate the Kurds' return to Iraq under these circumstances.

[1](#)6. In the meantime, protection conditions in the NML camp

continue to deteriorate. With hundreds of trucks queued at the border crossing every day, UNHCR reports that the NML refugees are increasingly engaged in "business," selling food and commodities to the truckers waiting to cross the borders. Refugee children are acting as runners for the business, darting in and out of traffic all day. A child was hit by a car during the week of June 30 and medevaced to Amman with a serious head injury. Nevertheless, the accident did not sway the camp committee's position in the least.

17. (SBU) Comment: From our perspective, a full-scale resumption of UNHCR activities in Iraq -- beginning in the north -- is the only way to resolve the lingering problem at NML. If UNHCR is able to reestablish basic services and then move quickly to start resettlement processing, the NML Kurds most likely will return voluntarily to northern Iraq. However, it is far from certain that UNHCR has agreed upon this approach, as there continues to be differences of opinion between UNHCR personnel in Geneva, Amman and Baghdad. PRM A/S Dewey's July 15-21 visit to the region hopefully will provide an opportunity to develop a common approach to this problem.

18. (SBU) Action Request: In the meantime, UNHCR/Jordan seeks assurances from resettlement countries that they will be able to conduct resettlement processing in northern Iraq. As requested ref b, refcoords seek guidance on: whether CPA Baghdad and BCIS would consider refugee resettlement processing in northern Iraq; and what information and/or arrangements BCIS would require to commit to resettlement processing in northern Iraq. We also need to consider which Overseas Processing Entity (OPE) -- Istanbul or Amman -- would be best equipped to work in northern Iraq.

19. (U) CPA Baghdad minimize considered.
GNEHM